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# Group gets grant for water study

By VAL VAN METER  
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**WINCHESTER** — Frederick and Clarke county officials will be asked to take part in a new project to assess local stormwater regulations.

The nonprofit Potomac Conservancy has won a \$500,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund to review local rules on runoff to determine how policies can be improved to promote Low Impact Development (LID) practices.

The Conservancy believes that using LID techniques can prevent substantial amounts of polluted runoff from entering local streams, rivers, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Patrick Felling, Virginia policy director for the Conservancy, based in Winchester, said the program is targeting 37 Virginia counties through which portions of the state's non-tidal rivers flow en route to the Bay.

It is also offering three \$15,000 prizes to developers who can propose and implement a project that can model LID.

When rain falls on a forest or a field, much of that water soaks into the ground, Felling said.

But a portion runs off the land into streams, filtered by vegetation.

LID would "mimic natural processes," Felling said, with most of the precipitation funneled into the ground and no more runoff to streams than a forest or field would normal-

ly generate.

Strategies for accomplishing this include rain gardens, which trap runoff and allow it to be taken up by plants, and methods to store runoff to water landscaping, or even use it for tasks such as flushing toilets.

The effort saves expensively cleaned potable drinking water and the cost of the energy to produce it, Felling said.

The developers who can show ways to do this, and reduce the cost over traditional methods of dealing with runoff, will win the prize money.

But the recognition, as LID specialists, will be worth more, Felling said.

In the meantime, most of the grant money will be used to create courses at local universities for students interested in learning more about LID.

Felling said George Mason University in Fairfax will participate and James Madison University in Harrisonburg has also been approached.

Shenandoah University in Winchester was unable to participate at this time, he added.

The students will be asked to undertake a project to evaluate the stormwater regulations of participating jurisdictions across the state.

The work is designed to show which regulations help to promote LID and which ones hinder it.

Students will use a worksheet developed by the Center for Watershed Protection, Felling said.

Experts in the local jurisdictions will be

asked to work with the project.

The aim will be to offer the assessment to the localities with the hope that they will see fit to change their rules to help promote LID.



Alison Teetor, natural resources planner for Clarke County, said she would be interested in participating in the project.

She said county officials have recently rewritten their stormwater runoff rules, with advice from the Center for Watershed Protection, to comply with the regulations drafted by Virginia leaders last year.

Teetor said Clarke County's new rules will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

Officials in most localities are expecting to change their ordinances to comply with the new state rules.

The draft of the new regulations was completed last year, but not approved before the change in administration in Richmond. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation is reviewing the regulations.

Felling said the Conservancy should complete its project next fall. If the state rules are ready for public comment, "We should be in a positive position" to influence local and state regulations, with sound data, he said.

"There's no better time to start than now."

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